



Misunderstood Repentance— An Enemy of Soul Winning

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(Chapter 4 from Dr. Hyles book, *Enemies of Soul-Winning*)

Over and over again the question is asked me, "Is repentance necessary for salvation?" Of course, this is of utmost importance. Anything that deals with the way a person can escape the fires of eternal Hell and go to Heaven to live forever is of vital importance. In this chapter, we will address this most important question.

1. First, we need to find what makes one lost. Please notice *John 3:18*, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" It is very plain in this verse what makes a person lost. Notice the words, "*he that believeth not is condemned already.*" A person who does not believe is condemned, so not believing is what makes a person lost.

Bear in mind, the word "believing" is the Greek word which means "to rely upon." When one believes on Christ, he simply relies on Him to save him and take him to Heaven when he dies. It is very plain here that what condemns a person is believing not. Then notice it says, "*because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*" Once again, we are told what makes a person lost - because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. It is as simple as that.

Now look at *John 3:36*, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" Again, we are trying to decide and determine what makes one lost. It is very plain here. Notice the word believeth, "*and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" What keeps a person from seeing life?

Believing not! What makes the wrath of God abide on a person? Believing not! So, from what must a person repent in order to be saved? He must repent of that which makes him lost. Since "believing not" makes him lost, "believing" makes him saved. In repentance there is a turning from the thing that keeps him from being saved to the thing that saves him. So, yes, there is a repentance from unbelief in order to believe. It is simply a change of direction. It means a turning around. You are going away from believing, and you decide to turn around and believe. You change your direction; you change your mind. With your will you believe and rely upon Christ to save you. In order to believe, you have to repent of unbelief. That which makes a man lost must be corrected.

Now turn to *John 5:40*, "*And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.*" Oh, how simple this is, and yet how plain! Why does a person not have life, according to this verse? Because he will not come to Christ. So, if a person is going away from Christ, he must turn around and come to Christ, which is a change of direction or a change of mind. This is repentance - repenting of the thing that keeps one from being saved, repenting from "going away" to "coming to."

Notice *Isaiah 53:6*, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*" Especially notice the words, "*we have turned every one to his own way.*" That's what not being saved is - turning to our own way. Now if we turn to God's way, which is putting our faith and trust in Jesus, we turn around from going our own way to going His way, from unbelief to belief. This is Bible repentance. Bear in mind, it is the faith that saves. The turning around is necessary in order to put our faith in Christ. One must repent from that thing that keeps him from being saved in order to be saved.

If a person were saved by good works, then he would have to repent of bad works, or of not doing good works, in order to be saved. If a person were saved by quitting his sinning, then he would have to repent of his sinning in order to be saved. A person is saved by believing, so he repents of his unbelief or turns from his unbelief in order to be saved.

Let us look at the verses that teach us we are saved by belief.

John 3:15, "*That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*"

John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"

John 3:18, "*He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*"

John 3:36, "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*"

Acts 16:31, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

There are those who say we have to repent of our sins in order to be saved. No, we have to repent only of the thing that makes us unsaved, and that is unbelief. If a person needs to turn from his sins in order to be saved, what sins does he turn from? Does he turn from pride? Does he turn from selfishness? Does he turn from covetousness? The truth is, nobody can turn from all of his sins until he is raptured and he receives a body like the body of the Saviour. *1 John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."* According to Psalm 19:12, we do not even know all of our sins. David said, *"Cleanse thou me from secret faults."* What he is talking about here is being cleansed from faults he doesn't even know he has. A person, when he is first saved, does not know all the things that he is doing that are wrong, and if a person has to repent of all of his sins, where is growth in grace? Where is being a babe in Christ? Where does the carnal Christian fit in here?

Now don't misunderstand me. I am certainly for separation and for living a godly life, but the cleansing of our lives is not done by us any more than salvation is done by us. Salvation is simply repenting of unbelief, and believing, and letting Christ save us. We yield to Him to save us; He does! Immediately the Holy Spirit comes in to live. The Holy Spirit begins His work of cleansing in our lives. He is the one Who cleanses, just as he is the one Who saves. He is the one Who points our sins out to us after we are saved just as He is the one Who saves us when we are saved.

This chapter is being dictated in San Antonio, Texas. I am sitting in a Holiday Inn. Tomorrow morning early I will catch a plane for Chicago. Let's suppose I get on that plane, and I am trusting the pilot to take me to Chicago. I do not know how to operate the plane, nor do I know the route to Chicago by air. There is nothing I can do to get myself to Chicago by that plane. I trust the pilot to get me there. So, we get up in the air thousands of feet high, and let's suppose I get a knife and cut up the seat in front of me. Now, where am I going? I'm still going to Chicago. Why? I repented of "not trusting the plane to take me" to "trusting the plane to take me."

The stewardess comes and says, "Mr. Hyles, what are you doing back here?" I say, "I'm just cutting up a little bit!"

Then suppose I reach up and cut off a lock of her hair. Now where am I going? I'm going to Chicago. You see, how I behave on the flight does not determine my destination.

So, the stewardess goes to the pilot and says, "Mr. Hyles, back in seat 14A is causing some disturbance. Look at my hair. Go back and look at the seat." The pilot leaves the plane in the hands of the co-pilot and comes back to seat 14A and says, "Mr. Hyles, what are you doing back here?" He looks at the seat I've cut up, he sees the lock of hair that I've cut off the stewardess, and I reach out and cut off his tie. Now where am I going? I'm going to Chicago. That was all determined when I got on the

airplane. Now the truth is, I will not enjoy Chicago as much as I would have enjoyed it, nor will I go to the part of Chicago I'd planned to, but I'm still going to Chicago.

When we put our faith and trust in Christ, and repent of unbelief, and believe, God's Holy Spirit comes in to live and begins to straighten us out. He points out our sins, and as we yield to Him, He cleanses us from our sins. If we misbehave on the journey, we are still going to Heaven, because we go to Heaven by trusting Christ to take us there. The Holy Spirit Who came in to live begins to point out things that we should and should not do. If we do not obey Him, if we misbehave on the journey, we will still go to Heaven; we simply will not enjoy it as much as we would have had we behaved, just as I would not enjoy Chicago as much as I would have had I behaved.

I know a young man who recently got married. He got an apartment several months before he got married and lived there alone until the wedding took place. What a mess that apartment was! His pants were hung on the bedpost, his shoes were left on the floor beside the bed, and the bed was never made. Then one day he got married. Now how did he get married? He got married by turning from being single to being married. He repented of not being married and got married. When he took his new bride to the apartment, she was aghast, but immediately she began to straighten things up. She put his shoes in the closet, took his shirt off the chair, removed his clothes off the bedpost, and made a lovely little apartment out of the mess that he had made. Now he was not married because he cleaned up his apartment; he was married because he

repented of that thing that kept him from being married. He repeated the vows and accepted her as his wife. It was then that she came in; it was then that his apartment began to get clean!

Practically every false doctrine comes from getting things out of order. God's divine order is salvation, then change; not change and then salvation! If one has to be changed to be saved, that's salvation by works. It is also salvation by the flesh. The truth is, one is cleansed from the sins of the flesh just as he is saved; by yielding to the Holy Spirit and letting Him do His work.

2. You can repent of something other than sin. *Matthew 7:3, "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders."* Notice that Judas repented. Now what does it mean? It means he repented about keeping the money. He had sold our Saviour for thirty pieces of silver; he changed his mind and took the silver back. A change of mind and change of direction took place, but it had nothing to do with salvation. He had made a bad deal; he regretted he had made that bad deal, and he tried to correct it.

Everybody who lives in sin eventually repents, but they do not repent of unbelief. They change their mind about sin. No one lives in sin without realizing later that it did not bring the joy, happiness, peace and contentment that it claimed to bring. I talk to people every week who are tired of their sins, unhappy in their sinful life or

living a miserable, wretched life because of the results of sin. What have they done? They have changed their mind about sin, and in some cases, they even quit their sin - at least that sin which was most predominant in their lives. You can repent of sin without repenting of unbelief. Such was the case with Judas. No doubt he repented that he had done wrong. He certainly repented of the bad deal he had made. He turned around, changed his mind and brought the money back, but he did not repent of that thing from which he must repent in order to be saved, and that is unbelief.

3. God repents. Notice *Genesis 6:6*, "*And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.*" Bear in mind, the word "repent" means "change of mind." God made man and wished He hadn't. He was grieved because of what man had done, and He repented that He had made man. This does not mean that God repented from sin, because God could not sin; He simply changed His mind, which He does often. Basically, that is what answered prayer is much of the time.

Now notice *I Samuel 15:35*, "*And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless Samuel mourned for Saul: and the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.*" God had made Saul king over Israel. The truth is that God did not want to do so, but Israel clamored for a king. Saul was chosen to be that king, but it then did not turn out as it should have. So, in this verse it simply says that God repented that He had made Saul king. He changed His mind.

What I'm saying is, there is repentance other than repentance from sin. A lady can change her mind about the kind of perfume she wears. A man can change his mind about the kind of food he eats or the kind of clothes he wears. He can change his direction concerning his manners. You can repent from discourtesy to courtesy. You can repent from stubbornness to leniency. You can repent from impatience to patience, but those things don't save. Repenting from the thing that makes you lost is the thing that makes you saved, and that is, repenting of your unbelief.

Now notice *Exodus 32:9-14*, "*And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the LORD his God, and said, LORD, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and thy shall inherit it for ever. And the LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.*"

Let me paraphrase the story. God said to Moses, "I'm sick and tired of the people and their rebellion. Get out of the way so I can consume them." Moses came to God and

said, "Lord, don't do that. You're the One Who brought the people out of the land of Egypt, and if You consume them, the heathen people are going to criticize You. Not only that! You promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that you would multiply their seed and that You would give them the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession." Moses pleaded his case before God, reminding God what God had promised. Then verse 14 simply says, *"The LORD repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."* The word "evil" here means something that would cause them pain; it's not talking about sin. God decided not to hurt them after all. He decided not to consume them after all. He changed His mind, but He did not change His mind concerning a sin, because God cannot sin.

Now turn to *Jonah 3:9, 10*, *"Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."*

God was going to punish Nineveh. Jonah had preached in Nineveh and had warned the people that destruction was coming. The people believed God, turned from their unbelief to belief, and God changed His mind about punishing the people. In verse 10 the Bible says, *"And God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not."*

Again, God simply changed His mind and changed His direction. He was going to punish; they believed; He decided not to punish. He changed from the direction of punishing to the direction of not punishing. This is repentance, but not repentance from sin, because God cannot sin.

Look at *Amos 7:3*, *"The Lord repented for this: It shall not be, saith the Lord."*

Amos 7:6, *"The Lord repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord God."*

So, repentance does not always deal with salvation and sin; it is simply a change of direction or a change of mind.

4. Now we consider repentance and salvation. Look at *Acts 3:19*, *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."*

Peter is preaching here. He tells the people to repent and be converted. Now we have to go back to what saves. *John 3:14-16, 18, 36*, *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."* *Acts 16:31*, *"And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus*

Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

So these people had to repent from not believing and believe in order that they might be converted. They had to change directions, change their minds.

Let me say again that I do not believe for a second that Christian people should live like the Devil. No preacher preaches separation more than I do. I simply believe that that separation is a work of the Holy Spirit just like regeneration is a work of the Holy Spirit, and it starts after one has repented from that which makes him lost, and that is unbelief. When this is done, he believes, he is saved. Then the Holy Spirit comes in and begins to tell the Christian what sins from which he should repent. The man changed his mind about unbelief. The Holy Spirit directed him there. Now the Holy Spirit comes in to live and begins to change his mind about other things.

Now look at *Acts 2:38*, "*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"

Peter is saying, "Change your mind and be baptized." Now, about what did they change their minds? This is answered in verse 41. Look at what they did in response. They gladly received His Word, and then they were baptized. So what was this repentance? It was repentance from not receiving His Word to receiving His Word. That's all Peter was saying. He was saying, "Change your mind about receiving the Word," which states that you must believe and repent from unbelief in order to be saved.

Now turn to *Acts 17:30*, "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent.*" Notice God commandeth all men every where to repent. Repent from what? Repent from the thing that keeps them lost, and that's unbelief. What corrects this? Look at *Acts 17:34*, "*Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Dammaris, and others with them.*" Notice it said, "certain men believed." So, when he said, "repent," he was saying "repent from unbelief and believe," because just as in *Acts 2:38* and 41 a command was given to repent, and the believing was the obedience to that command. They changed their mind about belief. They decided to believe instead of not believe.

Now look at *Mark 1:15*, "*And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*"

Jesus Himself is saying repent, and notice immediately He says, "repent, and believe." What He was saying is, "Quit unbelieving, and believe. Quit not believing, and believe." Again, I'm not saying a Christian should live like the Devil, but I am saying that changing your life does not save you. That's salvation by works. Faith is what saves you. You turn from unbelief to belief; from no faith to faith, and then repentance from sins begins, because He Who convicted you from the sin of unbelief to believing now lives in you. How easy it is now for Him to convict you day by day of other things from which you can repent and about which you can change your

mind.

5. Repentance from sin is directed to God's people.

Revelation 2:5, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."

Here is a case of a church that was a good church. It was a church that worked. It worked hard. It hated sin. It was doctrinally sound. *Revelation 2:2, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."* It was a patient church. It was a church that believed in the name of Jesus and did not faint in their standing for that. *Revelation 2:3, "And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."* However, it was a church that had left its first love. It does not say that that church lost its first love, but they left their first love. When you lose something, you don't know where it is. When you leave something, you know where to find it. It does not say that this church did not love any more. The truth

is they did love. Love is what made them faithful, what made them work, what made them have patience, what made them hate sin, what made them stand for the name of Jesus, what made them hate false doctrine. This was a church of people who loved God, but they had left their first love - that first sweet love - maybe more shallow than the love they had then.

It does not say that they loved Him less. The truth is they probably loved Him more, but God is saying, "I want both. I want the deep, mature love that you have now and the sweet expressive love that you used to have."

The only sin this church had committed was the sin of leaving their first love -that "Amen!" love, that "Hallelujah!" love, that "Glory to God!" love, that sweet, expressive love. Nevertheless, they sinned, and God told them to repent. Repent from what? Repent from drinking? No. Repent from adultery? No. This is not the subject here. It's repenting from not loving Christ with the first love.

This same type repentance was commanded to the church in Pergamos. *Revelation 2:16, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."* The same thing was said to the church at Thyatira in *Revelation 2:21, 22, "And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds."* The church in Sardis was told likewise to repent in *Revelation 3:3, "Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."* The church at Laodicea received the same command in *Revelation 3:19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."*

So you can see that God tells individuals to repent; He also tells groups to repent. He tells nations to repent. Time and time again He called Israel to repentance.

Now let us review, as follows:

1. God says to the unsaved, "Repent of your unbelief."

It's very interesting that in I John the word "repentance" is never mentioned, and yet the purpose of I John was to give people the assurance of salvation. *I John 5:13, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."* Of course, repentance is certainly implied throughout the entire book, because the book tells us that what saves is believing on Christ (or relying on Him) to save, which, of course, implies that that person must repent of what makes him lost, which is unbelief.

2. God says to the saved people, "Repent of sin." This is done by the Holy Spirit as He comes in to live to remind us to take the clothes off the bedpost, the shirt off the chair, put the shoes into the closet, etc.

3. If a person must repent of his sins to be saved, of what sins must he repent? Can he repent of all of them? Isn't that sinless perfection or holiness? Isn't that salvation by works? Of what sin must one repent? He must repent of the sin that makes him lost, and that's the sin of unbelief.

4. If turning from sins would get you saved, then turning back to sins would get you lost. In Acts 16:30 the very simple question is asked, *"What must I do to be saved?"* This is the one time in the Bible where this question is asked. Now the answer to this question must be what saves a person. *Acts 16:31, "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."* There's the answer-belief. There is nothing about repentance here, except, yes, there is something about repentance, because you can't believe without repenting from unbelief.

5. If a person has to clean up his own life before he gets saved, we are back to Arminianism or salvation by works.

6. We cannot do what the Holy Spirit can do. The Holy

Spirit first convicts us of our sin of unbelief to bring us to Christ. Once He brings us to Christ, He comes in us to live. *Romans 8:9, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."* *I Corinthians 6:19, 20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

Then when the Holy Spirit is in us, He begins to convict us of things in our lives that

should be changed. Then the Christian life becomes a constant repenting until we wake in the likeness of Christ.

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